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INR WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS
OF DEVELOPMENTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS

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AFRICA

Zaire

Mobutu Announces Amnesty. In an extemporaneous speech on June 24, President Mobutu announced that he intended to submit a draft law to the Legislative Council providing amnesty for Zairian refugees living in neighboring countries. On June 27 the Council unanimously approved the measure and extended it to include political prisoners in Zaire accused of "attacking the security of the state." According to Zairian radio, Mobutu is expected to sign the bill within the next few days. Opposition groups in Paris and Brussels have already declared that they do not intend to take advantage of the amnesty. (CONFIDENTIAL, Kinshasa 6603, June 24; UNCLASSIFIED, FBIS, June 27)

INR Comment The amnesty, combined with other measures that Mobutu announced on June 24, indicates a more forthcoming attitude on his part toward pressures for reform. The amnesty and the end of the emergency in Shaba also pave the way for additional steps toward improved relations between the Kinshasa regime and Shaba. What remains to be seen, however, is the extent to which Mobutu will, in fact, follow through. (CONFIDENTIAL)

LATIN AMERICA

Argentina

Human Rights Trends (INR Review and Analysis). Argentina's human rights record in 1978 displays some improvement over the 1976-77 period, but conditions have changed little in the last six months. Serious abuses still occur, despite reports of efforts by military officials to curb renegade counterterrorist activities. There is a reasonable prospect for gradual but significant improvement over the next year or so, however. In the meantime, the Argentines will probably pursue a damage-limiting strategy in their relations with the US.

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In recent weeks, President Videla's government has taken several noteworthy steps that are designed primarily to defuse human rights criticism during the OAS General Assembly (June 21-30).

--On June 20, the Inter-American Human Rights Commission was invited to pay a "special visit" to investigate "legal-judicial conditions."

--President Videla is said to have informed an archbishop on June 19 that 14 labor leaders would be released and the cases of others reviewed.

--Alfredo Bravo, a well-known labor leader and rights activist, returned home on conditional liberty on June 16 after 10 months in jail.

--Two restrictions on press freedom were rescinded on June 5.

Implementation of well-timed human rights "concessions" has been a consistent Argentine tactic over the past two years.

The prospects for gradual improvement during the coming months will be enhanced by the continued diminution of the terrorist threat and the likelihood that Videla and his fellow moderates in the armed forces will consolidate their control over the security forces. On the latter point, 3.3(b)(1) 50-60 junior and noncommissioned officers have been detained for abuses during security operations, a number of others have been reassigned, and over 400 policemen have been disciplined in the last 18 months. We will be better able to assess the impact of these steps after termination of the artificial environment created by the World Cup soccer competition (June 1-25), during which the security apparatus has been treading very lightly.

Those favoring gradual human rights improvements will argue that such a policy serves Argentina's domestic and international interests.

--Domestically, it will remove human rights considerations as a divisive factor and an inhibition on the military's reconstruction plans.

--Internationally, it will restore Argentina's tarnished image, decrease the possibility of new political and

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economic sanctions, and open the way to improved relations with the US.

The Argentines are willing to abide strained relations with the US because they assign a higher priority to their counterterrorist objectives. Videla will feel forced to react, however, when, as called for by the Kennedy-Humphrey Amendment, all US security assistance is terminated on September 30. Even so, he will probably try to assuage nationalistic sensitivities without unduly affronting the US. (CONFIDENTIAL/ NOFORN)

Brazil

Geisel Announces Constitutional Reform. Embassy Brasilia reports that in a nationwide address on June 23 President Geisel announced a constitutional reform package which would re-establish the principle of habeas corpus "in cases of political crimes against the national security and the economic and social order." Elaborating on the reform package, which still must win congressional approval, Geisel stated that it would also:

--provide legal guarantees of life tenure for the judiciary;

--assure the inviolability of legislators exercising their mandate to speak and vote (except in cases of crimes against national security);

--regulate the organization and functions of political parties; and

--end presidential authority to recess legislative bodies, declare a state of siege without legislative consent, suspend individual political rights, and banish Brazilians.

Noting that the reform package was neither perfect nor exhaustive, the President indicated that it was "better to have a good package that can be approved in good time than to try for an optimum result that might never be achieved." He added that the package represented "the closing of a first cycle of reforms that my government proposes to make."

The Embassy considers that Geisel's current effort represents a considerable and positive step forward, reflecting pressures that have been exerted on the regime largely through public debate by an aroused civilian elite supported by broad segments in the military. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

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Mexico

Student Death Triggers Riots. Rioting of several thousand students in Matamoros on June 26 was touched off by the death of a youth who allegedly had been beaten while in police custody. When the mayor of the city refused their demands that the police chief be fired, mobs set fire to the city hall, two state courts, and several automobiles. Windows were smashed in five banks, and at least 30 stores were looted. Press reports indicate casualties of at least one student killed and 30 injured. Federal troops restored order after four hours. Two Matamoros policemen have been jailed in connection with the death. (UNCLASSIFIED, Matamoros 57, June 27; UNCLASSIFIED, Associated Press 9, 72, 112, June 27)

NEAR EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

Iran

Shah Continues Liberalization Steps. The Shah told Ambassador Sullivan in late March that, despite the continuing unrest, he remained committed to a policy of political liberalization. Recent government actions seem to underscore this pledge. In early June, the Justice Minister announced a revision of the military judicial procedure code. Under the new procedures:

--civilian lawyers have the right to plead before a military court;

--restrictions on the number of defense lawyers at each trial are removed;

--detainees may have defense lawyers make final statements before examining magistrates; and

--defense lawyers have up to 20 days to study a case, as is the practice in civilian criminal courts.

The Minister also announced that the government was now considering reforming other judicial statutes.

"Progressive" lawyers have told Embassy Tehran officers that they will monitor court cases closely for evidence of improper procedure on the part of the government, prosecutors, and judges. These lawyers were heartened by the freedom in

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which the June 10 elections to the executive board of the Iranian Lawyer's Federation were conducted. In those elections, "progressives" and "progressive"-supported independents won 9 of the 12 board seats. Moreover, the courts apparently have demonstrated greater care in handling cases of those charged with participating in recent riots. These actions have been taken even though unrest continues, albeit on a much reduced scale from last month. (CONFIDENTIAL, Tehran 2995, 4466, 5445, 5944, 5962, 5965, March 28, May 10, June 7, June 21, 21, and 21, respectively)

INR Comment. The Shah expects disorders to continue as dissidents test the limits of his liberalization program. Nevertheless, he seems to have realized that, while a reversal of that policy might end public manifestations of turmoil, it would not cure the root causes of the violence. He seems convinced that, over the long run, his tactics will defuse much of the opposition to his regime and also enhance Iran's standing in the West. The recent easing of violence may give him some breathing space to work toward a more stable political order. (CONFIDENTIAL)

USSR AND EASTERN EUROPE

Soviet Union

Plight of Soviet Pentecostal Church Worsens. Leaders of the Soviet Pentecostal Church recently have expressed concern about increased regime pressure against their church. They see it as retaliation for their refusal to register and accept limitations imposed by Soviet law on preaching and seeking converts. They fear that Soviet authorities intend to destroy the church as part of the campaign against organized dissent. Pentecostal leaders see emigration as their only alternative, even though all applications by Pentecostal believers for exit visas have been rejected during the past two years. One source has estimated that some 20,000 Pentecostalists are actively seeking to emigrate. Frustrated by repeated refusals, seven Pentecostalists forced their way into Embassy Moscow on June 27. They say that they will not leave until they receive exit visas and are rejoined by a youth seized by the police at the Embassy entrance.

Georgiy Vins on Hunger Strike. Imprisoned dissident Baptist leader Georgiy Vins began a hunger strike on June 12

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after being severely beaten and placed in an isolation cell. According to his wife, the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium refuses to accept a petition for clemency unless Vins first admits his guilt -- a course of action he rejects on principle. At the same time, Vins feels that he is no longer able to carry on his ministry in the Soviet Union and has expressed willingness to emigrate. On June 20, visiting American Baptist leaders conveyed the concern of American Baptists over Vins' plight to the Chairman of the Ukrainian Council on Religious Affairs. They reported that the official's attitude was "unsympathetic and unresponsive." (CONFIDENTIAL)

EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Indonesia

Detained Students Released. Over the weekend, the government honored a previous public commitment and released 26 student activists arrested for involvement in protests prior to the March meetings of the People's Consultative Assembly. Those released constitute only the second echelon of arrested student leaders, however. Approximately 35 more prominent students are still detained, of whom some 15 reportedly will be tried in court. (CONFIDENTIAL, Jakarta 8598, June 27)

INR Comment. The releases may give a new impetus to newly resurfacing anti-government campus restiveness. In the past, the government has dealt with student protests through a combination of arrests and the use of faculty-student communication channels. The government recently dismantled the latter, however, and future student protests may not be so easily quelled. This could lead to increased arrests. (CONFIDENTIAL)

Philippines

Prominent Detainees Released. The Philippine Church Task Force on Detainees (TFD) provided Embassy Manila on June 22 with a list of 50 "political detainees" released by the Marcos government thus far in June. Prominent among those released were:

--the six opposition leaders released on June 5;

--Nelia Sancho, "the Red Beauty Queen," a Philippine University student and beauty contestant detained in 1976 on charges of involvement with the Communist New People's Army;

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--Mario and Melvin Cayabyab, a married couple who were among those reportedly tortured by Philippine security agents in the post-April 7 election crackdown;

--Father Emanuel Nabayra, one of seven Davao priests charged with subversion; and

--three co-defendants of Father De La Torre, another Davao priest also charged with subversion (De La Torre is still in detention). (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE, Manila 10604, June 23)

INR Comment. We are uncertain about the ultimate status of these cases. In a series of announcements early in June, Marcos ordered charges against some detainees dropped, promised amnesty for others, and directed that still others be released temporarily from detention. Earlier reporting indicated that the charges against some of the detainees mentioned above had been dropped. A TFD staffer, however, had the impression that, with the exception of the six opposition leaders, the releases from detention are only temporary and formal charges remain against the individuals. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

Assassination Plot Defendants Released. Antonio Nepomuceno and seven codefendants, charged in 1972 with attempting to assassinate President Marcos, were released from detention on June 16, according to Nepomuceno's wife. President Marcos earlier had announced their release as part of his June 10 directive on amnesty for detainees. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE, Manila 10604, June 23)

INR Comment: Nepomuceno, who was accused along with Serge Osmena, Jr. and Eugenio Lopez in the assassination plot, has been the subject of considerable interest by Amnesty International, which has lobbied extensively for his release. Under the terms of his release, the charges remain outstanding but his trial has been indefinitely suspended. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE).

Taiwan

Political Activist Arrested. Chen Chu, a 28-year-old native Taiwanese political activist, is being held by the Taiwan Garrison Command after her arrest on June 23. She had been in hiding since her house was searched on June 15. Formal charges, if any, will not be brought until an investigation of her case is completed. A June 26 Garrison Command press

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release stated, however, that "unlawful reactionary documents and books" had been found in her house.

Chen was active in an independent politician's election campaign last November, contributed to a book on those elections, and wrote a rather inflammatory poem published in a new oppositionist magazine. The government confiscated both the book and the magazine upon publication. (CONFIDENTIAL, Taipei 3925, 3978, 4010, 4022, June 22, 24, 26, and 27, respectively)

INR Comment. Chen's case has attracted considerable attention on Taiwan. Many believe that its handling by the authorities will indicate the government's attitude toward the recent upsurge in independent political activity on Taiwan. The unusual issuance by the Garrison Command of a press release on the incident may indicate, in itself, that the government will proceed cautiously. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Philippines

Aquino Amnesty/Exile Still Up in the Air. An amnesty/exile agreement for imprisoned Philippine opposition leader Benigno Aquino, widely rumored as imminent for the past three weeks, reportedly still is under consideration. President Marcos is continuing to delay a final decision on the matter.

3.3(b)(1) [redacted] Marcos is annoyed with the "heavy pressure" from the US to release Aquino and has postponed the decision because he does not want to appear to be submitting to US pressure after his having placed so much emphasis on national sovereignty. First Lady Imelda Marcos, and possibly Foreign Minister Romulo, have been lobbying against amnesty for Aquino, who they fear will be a potent anti-Marcos foe in the US.

3.3(b)(1) [redacted] Marcos does not trust Aquino's pledge to abstain from any exile activity which would "impair the prestige or security of the Philippines." He is considering making Aquino's release contingent upon a US guarantee of Aquino's good behavior in this regard.

Aquino and his supporters are still optimistic that an 3.3(b)(1) agreement will be worked out in the near future. [redacted] 3.3(b)(1) [redacted] the long delay in the expected release is putting great strain on Aquino and his family. (SECRET/NOFORN/NOCONTRACT/ORCON, [redacted] 3.3(b)(1)

3.3(b)(1) [redacted]

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